Alexander Wright

Modern Installation Artist Profile: Pierre Huyghe

**Pierre Huyghe**

Pierre Huyghe is a French modern artist whose works span many different mediums, including installation, film, and video art. He was born in 1962, in Paris, France, and works out of New York and Paris where he represents the Hugo Boss Prize in the Guggenheim Museum. In 2010, he won the Contemporary Artist Award from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, with the jurors declaring in their decision:

His body of work includes landmark video installations that have changed the course of contemporary film and video. He has continued to build upon this foundation, devising inventive projects that range from incisive social commentary to poetic moments of pure beauty. Simply put, Huyghe is one of the most influential artists of his generation.[[1]](#footnote-1)

These are just a small selection of Pierre Huyghe’s installation works, and I will briefly analyze each of them.

Beginning with “Atari Light,” this piece required two Atari joystick controllers, a computer game program interface and halogen lights, allowing viewers to play a game of “Pong” using the halogen lights in a white room. What is most remarkable about this piece is the scale of the work, making this among the largest games of Pong conducted in the world. The piece brings a classic 8-bit vibe into a room larger than most apartments, and allows the viewer to participate in the experience by playing.

The second piece, “Tate Modern” is another example of Huyghe using light, more specifically halogen lighting, as a medium for his work. It is composed of halogen light words saying “I DO NOT OWN TATE MODERN OR THE DEATH STAR” (in reference to the modern art museum in London and the weapon in the Star Wars trilogy). Most viewers would view this piece as a commentary on art ownership and the exhibition art system from the artist’s perspective, and I am inclined to agree. Once again, he uses a white halogen light in a white room, which gives an electric feel to the work.

The third piece, “black ice stage” features a medium-sized rectangular ice rink in a marble-colored room and a figure skater skating in circles. The ice is intentionally dark (thus emphasizing “black ice”), which compliments the color of the room. Like that of “Atari Light,” I most admire the scale of the work, and how at least in theory, the viewer could play along (assuming they had a pair of ice skates along with them). Perhaps the negative perception of black ice, which can come from driving accidents or other cautionary tales, is the central message of this piece.

Lastly, “The Host and the Cloud” is an installation piece described as “a tale in the mind of an absent subject” by the exhibition host.[[2]](#footnote-2) The piece was performed by a group of actors and allows the audience to fill-in-the-blanks by using classical character archetypes and perceptions of modern history because of the blank face canvass. One could view it as if it were a recreation of the Nuremberg Trials, while another can see it in an entirely different light.

 

“Atari Light” and “Tate Modern” by Pierre Huyghe

Found at http://www.vvork.com/?p=13249 and http://www.studio-international.co.uk/studio-images/Huyghe/Huyghe\_b.asp



“[l'expédition scintillante - untitled (black ice stage)](http://www.pbs.org/art21/slideshow/?artist=178)” by Pierre Huyghe, Found at: http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/pierre-huyghe



“The Host and the Cloud” by Pierre Huyghe. Found at: <http://www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/2011-01-28_pierre-huyghe/>

1. http://www.americanart.si.edu/research/awards/contemporary\_artist/2010/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/2011-01-28\_pierre-huyghe/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)